

AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

COUNTY OF CABELL, to-wit:

I, Eric Seth Johnson, being duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

1. I am a Task Force Officer (TFO) with the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) since September 2022. I am presently assigned to the USPIS Charleston, WV domicile, where my responsibilities include the investigation of crimes involving the United States Postal Service (USPS), specifically the investigation of narcotics proceeds and/or controlled substances sent through the U.S. Mail. I have completed the required training by the USPIS relating to my responsibilities as a TFO. In addition to my assignment with USPIS, I am also a Detective with the Metropolitan Drug Enforcement Network Team (MDENT) assigned from the Charleston Police Department where I have been employed since April of 2015. I have been assigned to MDENT since December of 2018. Within this capacity, I have conducted and been part of numerous mid to high level drug investigations and assisted USPIS with various parcel related narcotics investigations. Additionally, I am a canine handler with a certified narcotics canine, Rex. Prior to my employment with the Charleston Police Department, I worked as an Officer with the Ripley Police Department after obtaining my law enforcement certification through the West Virginia State Police Academy in 2013.

2. This affidavit is made in support of an application for a search warrant to search the contents of USPS Priority Mail Package bearing tracking number "9505 5108 3248 3156 8430 86" with a return address of "christian welch 1659 washington blvd huntington wv 25701" and a delivery address of "Nathan Williams P.O. Box 40037 Studio city CA. 91614" (hereinafter referred to as "SUBJECT PARCEL"). The SUBJECT PARCEL

is a USPS Priority Mail Large Flat Rate Box with approximate dimensions of 12.25"x12"x6". The SUBJECT PARCEL was mailed on June 5, 2023, from Huntington, WV 25701 with \$22.80 postage affixed. The SUBJECT PARCEL is currently located at 1000 Centre Way, Charleston, WV 25309.

3. The information contained in this affidavit is based on information I have gained from my investigation, my personal observations, my training and experience, and information related to me by other law enforcement agents and witnesses.

4. Drug trafficking background gained over the years has shown that drug dealers and drug traffickers utilize the USPS for shipping narcotics proceeds and controlled substances, including but not limited to cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, and pharmaceuticals. The use of Priority Mail Express, Priority Mail and First-Class Mail are favored because of the reliability, anonymity, speed (overnight service), minimal cost, and ability to track the mail piece.

5. Through experience gained in drug investigations by Postal Inspectors and other law enforcement agents, and through information provided by individuals who have been involved in buying, selling, and shipping drugs by Priority Mail Express, Priority Mail, and other types of shipments, the USPIS has established a drug profile policy to screen mail packages for narcotics and/or controlled substances. The profile characteristics include peculiarities in labeling and unusual packaging techniques as well as other considerations. The reason that handwritten labels are of interest is that the vast majority of premium mail services such as Priority Mail Express and Priority Mail involves business-to-business or business-to-person correspondence and features typewritten or computer-generated labels. Person-to-person correspondence (and the

handwritten labels attendant thereto) accounts for a very small minority of total Priority Mail Express and Priority Mail traffic.

6. Postal Inspectors, Special Agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and other intelligence sources have identified Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Oregon, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, and Texas as major source states for illegal drugs flowing into areas within the Southern District of West Virginia.

7. From my experience, training, and knowledge of drug shipments through the U.S. Mail, I am aware that drug traffickers frequently use fictitious names and addresses on the return address portion of the mailing label both to remain anonymous and avoid detection. Some return addresses have been found to be legitimate addresses, but the actual resident at those locations is either fictitious or non-existent. I am also aware that the address of the person that the mail piece is addressed to is generally not fictitious because a valid address is necessary for the package to be delivered. However, at times the true name of the addressee may be altered or ignored in favor of an alias or code name to better disguise their identity from law enforcement.

8. Based upon my knowledge, training, and experience, I know that drug traffickers using the USPS often use unusual packaging techniques. These may include excessive taping or wrapping or by including within the package items having strong odors in an effort to contain or mask the odor of controlled substances in order to avoid detection by trained narcotics dogs.

9. Your affiant knows based on training and experience, as well as consultation with other agents, that U.S. Mail is often used by narcotic traffickers to transport controlled substances, as well as U.S. currency derived from the distribution of controlled substances, either as payment or proceeds. Your affiant knows based on training and

experience that USPS Priority Mail Express and Priority Mail are commonly used to transport controlled substances because narcotic traffickers can track the parcels, and control dispatch times and locations.

BACKGROUND OF INVESTIGATION

10. On June 5, 2023, while reviewing USPS electronic records relating to shipments of parcels from the Southern District of West Virginia to known source states, such as California, Postal Inspectors identified USPS Priority Mail Package bearing tracking number “9505 5108 3248 3156 8430 86” with a return address of “christian welch 1659 washington blvd huntington wv 25701” and a delivery address of “Nathan Williams P.O. Box 40037 Studio city CA. 91614” (SUBJECT PARCEL). Based on his training and experience, your affiant believed the package to be consistent with the size, weight, and mailing characteristics of packages containing narcotics proceeds and/or controlled substances.

11. On June 5, 2023, your affiant retrieved the SUBJECT PARCEL from the Charleston, WV Processing and Distribution Center (PDC) and noted, among other characteristics that the SUBJECT PARCEL bore handwritten name and address information, excessive clear tape, and was mailed to California, a known source state for illicit drugs coming into the Southern District of West Virginia.

12. On June 5, 2023, your affiant made inquiries with CLEAR, an electronic database that has proven reliable in previous investigations in determining the legitimacy of name, address, and phone number information, regarding the return address of “christian welch 1659 washington blvd huntington wv 25701”. CLEAR showed this name does not associate at that address. Your affiant also conducted a search regarding the

destination address of “Nathan Williams P.O. Box 40037 Studio city CA. 91614”. CLEAR showed this name does not associate at that address.

13. Your affiant conducted a search of USPIS law enforcement records of previous seizures relating to both the return and delivery addresses. Your affiant identified a previous seizure destined to Nathan Williams, PO Box 40037, Studio City, CA 91614-4037. This seizure was on May 12, 2023, of \$2,100 US currency from USPS Priority Mail package bearing tracking number “9534 6121 2459 3128 3053 42”.

14. On June 5, 2023, your affiant provided his trained narcotic detection dog, “Rex”. Rex has experience with narcotics investigations including drug parcels and was last certified in April of 2023. The SUBJECT PARCEL was placed in a line-up with four (4) additional boxes of similar shapes and sizes. Rex conducted an exterior examination of all the parcels. Rex positively alerted on the SUBJECT PARCEL indicating the presence of the odor of controlled substances.

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3:23-mj-00024

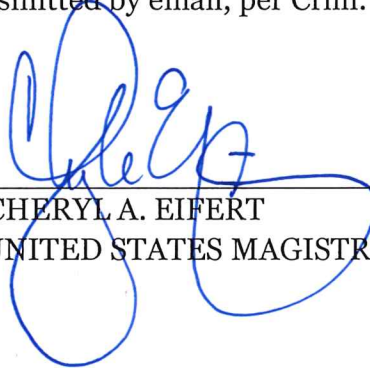
15. Based on the information contained herein, your affiant maintains there is probable cause to believe that the SUBJECT PARCEL - USPS Priority Mail Package bearing tracking number "9505 5108 3248 3156 8430 86" - contains controlled substances, and/or proceeds which are evidence thereof, and/or contraband, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1), 843(b) and 846.

Further your affiant sayeth naught.



ERIC SETH JOHNSON
USPIS TASK FORCE OFFICER

On the 6th Day of June 2023, this affidavit was sworn to by the affiant, who did no more than attest to its contents pursuant to Crim. R. 4.1 (b)(2)(A), by telephone after a document was transmitted by email, per Crim. R. 4.1.



CHERYL A. EIFERT
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

